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UTAH DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH

News Release

Obesity is Risky Business
New data show higher BMI ups risk for chronic diseases

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The risk of having some chronic conditions increases as a person moves up within weight categories, according to data from the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) May 2010 Health Status Update. This is the first time that the 'obese' weight category has been divided into three classes, allowing a look through a window to obesity and chronic conditions as a person moves up from one class to another.

"We had known that a person at higher weight was at risk of having other co-morbid conditions, said Michael Friedrichs," UDOH Epidemiology Manager, "but we were surprised at the significance of the findings."

For example, a person classified as obese class III (BMI >40) is 19 times more likely to have diabetes and 11 times more likely to have high blood pressure than a person with an ideal BMI."

Obese adults were also more likely to have high cholesterol, asthma, and arthritis and their risk increased with each class of obesity. Rates of major depression were higher for obese adults as well.

According to the report, 24% of Utah adults were obese in 2008. Of those, nearly 64% were Class I Obese (BMI 30-34.9), 23% were Class II Obese (BMI 35-39.9), and nearly 13% were Class III Obese (BMI >40).

"This new information shows the very dramatic contribution of obesity to the overall poor health of many Utahns, and the burden of disease on the population," said Lynda

Blades, Program Manager for the UDOH Physical Activity, Nutrition & Obesity Program.

Because the risk of having a chronic condition increases as a person moves up from one weight class to another, it's important that people lose weight or at the very least maintain weight. Safe weight loss can help control chronic conditions worsened by obesity and may also reduce the chance of developing many other diseases.

The Health Status Update report can be found at:

http://health.utah.gov/opha/publications/hsu/10May_Obesity.pdf.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.